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NURSERY SCHOOLS

A NEW MOVEMENT IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

THE large playroom with its colorful walls has an air of expectant waiting. The yellow curtains at the low, wide windows are drawn back so the sun can look through. In one window hangs a white cage containing a golden colored canary; in another a bowl of gold fish stands; and in the others plants are blossoming. Low tables and chairs are placed here and there in the room; in one corner is a piano; in another are a sand box and a box of blocks. All along the walls are low cupboards and blackboards over which hang a few pictures of child life.

Beyond the open door at the far end of the room is a white-tiled, immaculate toilet with low sinks, faucets, soap containers, low mirrors, and hooks for towels, cups and tooth brushes. Each hook is marked with a name and a picture so that each child may independently find his own.

From the back window a garden is seen with a border of bright flowers, a row of swings, a slide, and to one side a number of little folding beds. What is it all about, anyway? Why this air of quiet waiting, one wonders.

Listen! Little feet are pattering up the walk outside; the door is pushed open and children's voices are saying, "Good morning, we are here." The room and the garden were waiting for the children to make them alive. Soon other children's voices are heard as they come. One is holding tightly to his mother's hand; another is pushed in a go-cart by big brother; others have learned to come by themselves. All are very young, none over five. How happy they look as they run in the cloak room! This little room is alive with children pulling off coats and putting on pretty blue, pink, or green overalls, which they take from the yellow bags hanging on the pegs. Each peg is known by the picture pasted above it. The dressing over, they scamper out to the toilet to find towel, cup, and tooth brush. Such fun they have to know they can really play this game themselves; such zest at brushing teeth is a joy to see.

This game over, they are ready for the day. The room is now truly alive as blocks rattle to the floor and big balls roll about. After a time of free play a chord is quietly struck on the piano and the children gather around after each has his toy in its correct place. Certain laws each must keep here: try to use what you have and put away one thing before taking another; thus order, freedom, and happiness pervade the room.

The next half hour is spent in music, rhythm, and songs as in any kindergarten. Soon preparations for the morning lunch are made by the children—washing hands, placing tables and chairs, passing cups and paper napkins, pouring milk, and passing crackers. The cleaning up afterwards is also done by the children, each in turn washing cups and wiping them, cleaning tables and sweeping the floor.

A period of quiet listening to the piano or to a story follows and then another period of free play or activity either in the house or outside. Soon the time for noon lunch arrives. Keen interest in washing face and hands, tying on bibs, and drinking water ensues. At lunch you would be surprised at the politeness and the patience shown by these babies.

Lunch over and teeth brushed, away they go upstairs or outside to the waiting beds. Pulling off shoes and slipping into a sleep-

ing bag is the work of a minute and each one is soon in the land of sleep and rest for two hours. Now mothers and older children arrive to take their babies home. The room is left again to quietness and rest after playing its part in a joyful, well spent day.

Sometimes a mother stays awhile to talk to the sympathetic director. Thus she obtains and gives valuable aid in the development of her child. Once in awhile she spends the entire day at the school so she may understand more fully what is being done for the welfare of the children. Then once a month she attends the regular meeting held after school hours; here she meets and discusses problems with other mothers. All receive instruction in the physical and mental hygiene so necessary in training children well. This instruction is given by either the psychologist or the dietitian: both of whom regularly inspect the children.

"Does such an ideal place for children really exist?" you may ask. "We know of the kindergarten and the day nursery, but neither of these seem as ideal as this school."

The kindergarten is not as ideal for very young children as this school, because it has been lax about the attention given to the children under four years of age. The day nurseries have helped busy mothers by affording a safe place in which to leave their children, but they have no carefully worked out program for child development. They have not yet seen the vision of correct adult living as a result of habits developed in the pre-school period. The modern nursery school has this vision, the fulfillment of which seems nearer each year.

Such leading educators as G. Stanley Hall, Margaret and Rachel McMillan, Norsworthy, Whitley, Patty Hill, Baldwin, Stecher, and Gesell are showing more and more surely the importance of the pre-school years in the life of the individual. They are proving that the bases of character and personality are established during this period; that the causes of mental and nervous disorders lie in the conflicts with environment at this time. We speak of personality and character as habit; the foundation for future habits are easily formed between the ages of one and six. Habits formed then may be kept and added to all through life. So the nursery school educates by building habits necessary for the fullest and best development of each child. The development of the most important social, moral and physical habits is the aim of their work—such habits as co-operation, worship, ownership, cleanliness, sociability, and self-control. Such ideals as self-dependence, freedom within the law, self-expression, and love of the beautiful are striven for by the directors of the children in these schools.

To one of these nursery schools came Frank, aged two. His father was a university professor and his mother was studying for a master's degree in the same university. Frank, the only child, was developing an abnormality because of too much adult attention. He did not like to play with other children and even when taking a psychological test he would not co-operate, because he wanted his own way. His intelligence was superior, but his motor control was poor.

The first day in school Frank would not lie down at the rest period, but stubbornly sat on the floor. The director finally had to take him by the arms and compel him to lie down. The next day at his home mother reported that Frank took his stuffed buffalo into a pen he had made of blocks. He said, "Buff, lie down" several times. Then he came over to his mother and said, "Buff bad. Buff won't lie down." He went back and knocked Buff over. Again he ran to his mother and said, "Buff good. Buff lie down." He repeated this play several times. The next day in school he ran to his bed and lay down voluntarily. When his mother came for him that day he ran to her and

called joyously, "Frank lay down, yes, yes. Frank good too." From that day he enjoyed the rest period, but best of all the joy in co-operation here led to the same spirit in other things. Now after a year he has developed in social cooperation, unselfishness, and also in motor control. He gives promise of becoming an exceptionally well balanced child.[1]

Another child who came to a similar school was Jane. She came from poor and not well educated parents. Poor Jane was suffering from rickets, due to malnutrition and want of sunlight. The director saw to it that Jane had sufficient food and rest, and that she played out in the sun as much as possible. In two months time Jane showed much improvement and by the end of the year she was perfectly cured. Her mother had shown much interest in Jane's cure and had tried diligently to follow the director's advice. Thus not only was Jane helped, but her mother's responsibility was awakened and a desire to learn the best way to raise her child.[2]

These are only two cases among a thousand which could be cited, but they are enough to give us some idea as to the possibilities of the nursery schools. Further realization of their value may be secured by quotations from three of the leaders of this pre-school movement.

Baldwin and Stecher say, "The study of normal as well as abnormal psychology shows that the earlier a child makes its social contacts and feels itself an integral part of a community the easier does its adjustments come to the requirements of adult life."[3]

Gesell gives us these facts: 17 per cent of the deafness in school children occur between the ages of two and four; 81 per cent of the stutterers and 96 per cent of the lispers develop before the age of six; one-third of all the cripples are made so by paralysis or bone disease before the age of five; one-half the cases of blindness in school children occur before the age of six; correct care of the teeth at this period will eliminate much of the tooth decay now so prevalent; the germs of mental illness are laid during these early years.[4]

Knowing these things, we should see why it is necessary to care so well for the pre-school child. Not that parents are failing in their duty, but that they do not know or realize what training the child should have during this period. Children in crowded tenement districts need a place in which to develop to a better advantage; children of the very busy mother whose child must develop as best it may need more opportunity; pampered, spoiled children of rich parents especially need schools of this type in order to grow into healthy children morally and physically. There are many good parents in all classes of people; parents who know almost instinctively how to treat children of this age. It appears that these are the ones who are leading in this nursery school movement. It is often true that those who have at heart the most good for their children recognize first the thing of greatest value to them. Would that all could be waked to the real needs of the pre-school child!

The first nursery schools in the United States were inspired by the one organized by the McMillan sisters in London in 1908. Recognizing the value of such schools, Parliament made provision for them in the Fisher Education Act which reads thus: "The powers of the Local Education Authorities . . . . shall include power to make arrangements for supplying or aiding the supply of nursery schools (which expression shall include nursery classes) for children over two and under five years of age, or such later age as may be approved by the Board of Education, whose attendance at

[1]Baldwin and Stecher, *Physiology of the Pre-School Child.* P. 249.

[2]McMillan, *The Nursery School and the Mother,* p. 6.

[3]Baldwin and Stecher, *op. cit.* p. 265.

[4]Gesell, *The Pre-School Child,* pp. 85-129.

such a school is necessary or desirable for their health physically and mentally . . . "[5]

In accordance with this Education Act of 1918 the English National Board of Education issued rather detailed regulations setting forth the purposes, standards, and arrangements of the nursery schools. In these regulations are found two functions: "First, the close personal care and medical supervision of the individual child, involving provision for its rest, comfort, and suitable nourishment; and, second, definite training, bodily, mentally, and socially, involving the cultivation of good habits in the widest sense, under the guidance and oversight of skilled and intelligent leaders, and the orderly association of children of various ages in common games and occupations."[6]

Gesell regards the Fisher Act as a product of the English movement that grew out of the World War; it represents a determination to reduce an alarming amount of physical defect through preventative pre-school measures. The law may also be regarded as an attempt to remedy the formalizing and unhygienic tendencies of the existing English infant schools and kindergartens, and a recognition of the value of the progressive type of work like that of the McMillan Nursery School. Thus England was quick to recognize the value of pre-school education.[7]

In 1922 the first nursery school in America was opened, Boston being the first of our cities to see the value of the pre-school movement. The Nursery School Committee of the Woman's Education Association employed Miss Abigail Eliot to transform their day nursery into a nursery school. Miss Eliot had been trained in the Rachael McMillan Nursery School in London. The same year the University of Iowa Laboratory for Pre-School Child Study was opened. This school has grown rapidly and is now considered one of the best in this country. The Merrill-Palmer Institute for Home Making in Detroit also established a nursery school in 1922 and is one of the few institutions in this country to give training to adult students. Since then there have been about forty opened in our northern and western states. Columbia University, the University of Chicago, and the University of Minnesota, each organized a school last year, and each is obtaining excellent results. These nursery schools are all private institutions established by clubs, endowment funds, or universities for philanthropic or experimental purposes. The only public one is in Highland Park, Michigan, but "it will not be long," says Baldwin, "before the public school will recognize its duty toward the younger children, not to relieve the mothers of the care of this important period in education, but to help direct this care in the light of scientific analysis of the child and methods of training."[8]

This movement is yet in its formative period; it will probably be up to the kindergarten to give it permanent shape. Both Pestalozzi and Froebel, had they lived today, would perhaps feel that the kindergarten did not live up to its opportunities unless it responded to this new advance in education. Surely Froebel intended when he started the kindergarten movement that it should grow and advance as child study grew. Gesell thinks that the American Kindergarten should grow, expand, and readjust its field; thus only can it develop a continuous health supervision and mental hygiene program for the much neglected younger pre-school child. Perhaps this will be better than adopting the pattern England has already laid.[9]

The first American Nursery School, as we have seen, was a transformed day nursery. The one supervised by Columbia University and many of the others in our

[5]Gesell, *op. cit.* p. 44.
[6]Gesell, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
[7]Gesell, *loc. cit.*
[8]Baldwin and Stecher, *op. cit.*, p. 265.
[9]Gesell, *op. cit.*, p. 59-73.

country were established in the same way. The day nurseries are not a part of the public school system, but most of the kindergartens do. If the public system is to develop this work then, the kindergarten seems the best place in which to start. The plan of the Iowa Laboratory of the Pre-School Child is perhaps the most feasible in working out such an idea. They have two groups of children, one of children from two to three and one of children from three to four. Those from three to five are distributed between the groups, according to their maturity. The children are admitted only after a short preliminary examination to determine whether they are of normal intelligence. From this examination the basis of their general development and the group in which they shall be classified are determined.

The children in the first of these groups come to school at nine and stay until ten-thirty. Then the older group arrive and stay until twelve. In the Iowa school there is yet another group known as the junior primary which attends from nine until twelve. This group uses an entirely different room and the work is much like that of any kindergarten—only more physical and mental inspections are carried on and daily or weekly records are kept of the child's development.[10]

Perhaps it would not be advisable to copy this plan to the letter because the conditions of the community, the funds available, and other local circumstances would necessarily modify the needs. However, it would be possible for most all kindergartens to have children from two to four years come at eight forty-five and stay until eleven thirty. Then another group from four to six years of age could come at twelve and stay until three.

The program followed in these schools should always be elastic, changes being made to suit the children's interests, and to permit activities appropriate to various seasons, holidays, and festivals. Such a program as the one given below might prove practical for the younger group:

8:45 to 9:00—Inspection by the nurse
9:00 to 9:30—Free play or handwork
9:30 to 9:50—Music—rhythm and songs
9:50 to 10:05—Story or nature talk
10:05 to 10:30—Morning lunch—milk and crackers
10:30 to 10:50—Rest
10:50 to 11:10—Conversation
11:10 to 11:30—Literature

For the older children the program would be much the same except that it would run from twelve o'clock to three.

The equipment for the nursery school should be well chosen. That of the play ground should consist of swings with seats 12 inches above the ground, a teeter 18 inches high, and a slide 5 feet high. The ladder of the slide should end in a small platform at the top, provided with a hand rail. The portable slide is very convenient and has proved to be secure and durable. This equipment may be gotten from the Fred Medard Company, Dekalb and Potomac Streets, St. Louis, Mo.

In the play room it is of much importance to have the furniture of convenient size and adapted to the needs of the child. A good height for the chair seats is 12 inches from the floor and a good size for the tables is 20 inches by 36 inches and 24 inches high. The sand table should be three feet wide, 10 feet long, and 22 inches high, topped by a shallow zinc-lined box and filled with white sand. Smooth pebbles of various sizes, shells, small wooden blocks, aluminum cups, cookie cutters in a variety of shapes, doll-sized cake pans, large bottles, and a funnel should all be supplied for their sand play.

Large blackboards are indispensable. They should be set low around the wall, so low that the children can sit on the floor and draw. Besides these there should be a victrola and records on a low stand easily accessible to the children; an open front doll-house containing four rooms, 15

[10]Baldwin and Stecher, *op. cit.*, p. 17-21.

inches square; and low cupboards containing large blocks, toys, scissors, broom, dust cloths, cups and saucers, nails, hammers, saws, yard stick, goods for doll clothes, clay pipes for bubble blowing, soap, wooden beads, modeling clay, pencils, drawing paper, and colored paper. Also, such toys as dolls, balls of various sizes, dominoes, and "stabilt" blocks should be in the room. Two good supply houses for these materials are Schoenhut Company, Sepviva and Adams Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Milton Bradley Company, Springfield, Massachusetts.

There should also be a low shelf of books. Those suggested for this purpose are:

Anonymous—"All About the Three Little Pigs," Cupples and Leon, N. Y.
Bannerman—"Little Black Sambo," Stokes, N. Y.
Crane, W.—"The Mother Hubbard Picture Book," Lane, N. Y.
Falls, C. R.—A B C Book, Doubleday Page, N. Y.
Field. E.—Poems of Childhood, Scribners, N. Y.
Moore, C. C.—"'Twas the Night Before Christmas," Houghton Mifflin, N. Y.
Potter, B.—"The Tale of Peter Rabbit," Warne, N. Y.
Stevenson, R. L.—"Child's Garden of Verses," Scribners, N. Y.

A few suggested song books for the aid of the director are:

Ayres, F.—"Mother Goose Melodies," Schirmer, N. Y.
Crowinshield, E.—"Mother Goose Songs for Little Ones," Milton Bradley, Springfield, Mass.
Gaynor, J. L.—"Songs of the Child World," Nos. 1 and 2, Church and Company, N. Y.
Neidlinger, W. H.—"Small Songs for Small Singers," Schirmer, N. Y.
Poulson, E.—"Holiday Songs and Every Day Songs and Games," Milton Bradley, Springfield, Mass.

Also a few suggested victrola records are these:

18094—Victor—"Minuet" (Boccherini); "Traumerei" (Schumann)
3100—Columbia—"March" (Schubert); "March" (Gade); "Soldier's March" (Schumann)
3125-C—"Huntsman's Song" (Meyerbeer); "Gypsy Rondo" (Haydn)
3095-C—"Sleep, Baby, Sleep" (Mozart); "Rock-a-Bye Baby" (Mozart); "Lullaby" (Schubert); "Cradle Song" (Schubert)
17735-V—"Songs and Calls of our Native Birds" (Gorst)
18976-V—"Humpty-Dumpty"; "To Market"; "Crooked Man"; "Tommy Tucker"; "Mother Hubbard"; "Sing a Song of Sixpence"; "I Love Little Pussy"; "Feast of Lanterns"
18253-V—"Motive for Skipping"; "Theme for High Stepping Horses"; "Horses or Reindeer Running"; "Theme for Skipping."
17568-V—"Let Us Chase the Squirrel"; "How-do-you-do, My Partner"; "The Muffin Man"; "Soldier Boy"; "Did You Ever See a Lassie."[11]

A less expensive series of records, distributed by the Plaza Music Co., New York, and available in many ten-cent stores, are the Playtime Records; they include games and Mother Goose rhymes. The ones listed here are good:

207—"The Mulberry Bush"; "Oats, Peas, Beans and Barley Grow"
232—"Little Boy Blue"; "Fiddle Dee Dee"; "Pat-a-Cake"; "Polly Put the Kettle on"; "Baa! Baa! Black Sheep"; "Bobby Shafto"; "Ride a Cock Horse"; "Pussy-Cat, Pussy-Cat."
226—"The Toyman's Shop"; "A Christmas Carol."

Of course, the initial cost of this equipment would amount to a considerable sum, but further expense would not be great. The University of Iowa charges a yearly fee of $11 for each child. This pays practically all running expenses outside the director's salary. Some of the other schools charge only for the lunches which amount to about 15 cents a day. How small these charges seem when the good each child derives from a propitious start in life is considered!

In the states where kindergartens are already established as a part of the public school system the expense would not be much to extend the work according to these suggested plans. Where the kindergartens are not a part of the public system, the first expenditure would naturally be greater. However, if the states and the nation want better citizens, they cannot put their funds into a better investment than in the preschool child.

[11]Compiled from Baldwin and Stecher.

From over the seas there comes to American education this challenge flung out by Margaret McMillan: "God give America 'brave wings' and make her strong to serve, and swift to soar. We look to her to develop, and to finish what has been begun in the Old Country in weakness, in trembling faith, and at a great sacrifice to the pioneers who have left us. Time and again have I feared that my dear sister's life was given in vain. Not so, 'The work of the just is in the hand of God.'"

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Virginia Buchanan

WRITING VERSE--EARLY AND LATE

POETRY IN THE FIRST GRADE

SOME days ago I had the opportunity of teaching the 1-A group, all of them children I had promoted from my grade at mid-term. After a few minutes free conversation, one of the children said, "Read us some poetry, Miss Cornell, won't you please?" Then a chorus of voices, "Oh, yes, please do!"

"Children," I replied, "you do love poetry, don't you? Can you remember the names of some poems you love the best?"

They called for many of our favorites, among them: "The Dearest One" and "Oh, Deary Me," from *When Little Thoughts Go Rhyming,* by Elizabeth Knoble; "The Turtle," by Vachel Lindsay; "Difficulties" and "Very Lovely," by Rose Fyleman. After reading these and reciting "The Turtle" with all the children, I closed my book and said, "Children, you know so many pretty poems, I wonder if you couldn't write one yourself?" Without any hesitation, they answered, "I think I can."—"Let's try; then we can surprise Miss Boddie!"

I talked to them a few minutes about our prettiest poems. "What are some of the things we must think of before we try to write a poem?" I asked.

"They must sound like music," said one child; another added: "We must have the last words on the lines sound alike." And another said, "Yes, and we must all think."—"Yes," I said, "and first of all, children, we must decide what to write about."

A suggestion at once came from a small girl in the group: "Let's write a fairy poem, because they are so pretty."—"All right," I replied, "now think for a moment, and see if you can give me a good idea to start with." Almost immediately a little girl gave, "There was a little fairy."—"That is fine," I said, "but can't you make it a little longer? Think of something fairies wear." "Bells," said the same child, "they wear bells on their caps!"—"Then," I said, "think and give me the first line over again." This time one said:

There was a little fairy, with a bell on her cap—

I wrote it on the board, and said, "That is pretty; now what must we think of to make the next line?" They told me the next line must end with a word that sounded like "cap."—"Very well," I said, "who can give me some words that sound like 'cap'?" All thought for a few seconds, and then several hands went up. They gave lap, rap, tap, sap, map, and at last nap. I said, "I like nap best, because fairies do take naps, you know. Now let us think for a moment—what do they sleep in?" The same little girl who had been thinking so keenly said,